

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method for routing calls of an automatic call distributor system, comprising:

5 receiving a call from a caller requesting connection with one of a plurality of agents;

providing the caller with an option to commit to a predetermined time limit for the call time; and

assigning a higher priority to the call if the caller commits to the predetermined time limit.

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2. The method of Claim 1 wherein assigning the call a higher priority comprises:

queuing the call in a queue, in response to the caller committing to the predetermined time limit;

15 queuing the call in a second queue, in response to the caller choosing not to commit to the predetermined time limit.

3. The method of Claim 1, further comprising:

20 connecting the call to one of the agents;

determining that a call time associated with the call has exceeded a predetermined time limit; and

initiating a remedial action, in response to determining that the call time has exceeded the 25 predetermined time limit.

4. The method of Claim 3, wherein initiating the remedial action comprises disconnecting the call.

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5. The method of Claim 3, wherein initiating the remedial action comprises re-queuing the call in the first queue.

6. The method of Claim 3, wherein initiating the remedial action comprises:

deciding whether to extend the predetermined time limit;

5 determining that the time associated with the call has exceeded a second predetermined time limit; and

initiating a second remedial action in response to determining that the time associated with the call has exceeded the second predetermined time limit.

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7. The method of Claim 6, wherein initiating the second remedial action comprises disconnecting the call.

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8. The method of Claim 6, wherein initiating the second remedial action comprises re-queuing the call in the first queue.

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9. The method of Claim 6, further comprising initiating a third remedial action in response to deciding not to extend the predetermined time limit.

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10. The method of Claim 3, wherein connecting the call to one of the agents further comprises connecting the call to one of the agents and starting a timer in response to connecting the call, and wherein determining that the time associated with the call has exceeded the predetermined time limit comprises determining that the time associated with the call has exceeded the predetermined time limit based on the timer.

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11. The method of Claim 3, wherein determining that the time associated with the call has exceeded the predetermined time limit comprises:

5 determining that the time associated with the call has exceeded a first predetermined time limit;

activating a warning indication in response to determining that the time has exceeded the first predetermined time limit; and

10 determining that the time associated with the call has exceeded a second predetermined time limit.

12. The method of Claim 11, wherein indicating to the caller comprises generating an audio tone.

15 13. The method of Claim 11, wherein indicating to the caller comprises playing a recorded message to the caller.

20 14. The method of Claim 1, wherein providing the caller with the option comprises:

 providing the caller with an estimated wait time based at least on the predetermined time limit; and

 providing the caller with the option to commit to the predetermined time limit for the call time.

15. An automatic call distributing system for managing calls of an automatic call distributor, comprising:

5 at least one interface operable to receive a call from a user over a first connection with a first endpoint of the user, the call comprising a request for service;

a processor operable to:

provide the caller with an option to commit to a predetermined time limit for a call time; and

10 assign a higher priority to the caller if the commits to the predetermined time limit.

16. The system of Claim 15 further comprising:

15 a first queue operable to retain the call until an agent for the first queue becomes available; and

a second queue operable to retain the call until an agent for the second queue becomes available; and

20 wherein the processor is operable to assign a higher priority to the caller by queuing the call in the first queue in response to the caller committing to the predetermined time limit.

17. The system of Claim 16, wherein the processor is further operable to:

queue the call in the first queue, in response to the caller selecting the first queue;

5 connect the call to an agent when an agent becomes available for the first queue;

determine that a time associated with the call has exceeded a predetermined time limit; and

10 initiate a remedial action, in response to determining that the time associated with the call has exceeded the predetermined time limit.

18. The system of Claim 16, wherein the processor is operable to initiate the remedial action by 15 disconnecting the call.

19. The system of Claim 16, wherein the processor is operable to initiate the remedial action by re-queuing the call in the first queue.

20 20. The system of Claim 16, wherein the processor is operable to initiate the remedial action by:

deciding whether to extend the predetermined time limit;

25 determining that the time associated with the call has exceeded a second predetermined time limit; and

initiating a second remedial action in response to determining that the time associated with the call has exceeded the second predetermined time limit.

21. The system of Claim 20, wherein the processor is operable to initiate the second remedial action by disconnecting the call.

5 22. The system of Claim 20, wherein the processor is operable to initiate the second remedial action by re-queueing the call in the first queue.

10 23. The system of Claim 20, further comprising initiating a third remedial action in response to deciding not to extend the predetermined time limit.

15 24. The system of Claim 20, wherein the processor is further operable to start a timer in response to connecting the call to one of the agents, and wherein the processor is further operable to determine that the time associated with the call has exceeded the predetermined time limit based on the timer.

20 25. The system of Claim 20, wherein the processor is further operable to determine that the time associated with the call has exceeded the predetermined time limit by:

25 determining that the time associated with the call has exceeded a first predetermined time limit;

activating a warning indication in response to determining that the time has exceeded the first predetermined time limit; and

30 determining that the time associated with the call has exceeded a second predetermined time limit.

26. The system of Claim 25, wherein the processor is operable to activate a warning indication by generating an audio tone.

5 27. The system of Claim 25, wherein the processor is operable to activate a warning indication by playing a recorded message to the caller.

10 28. The system of Claim 15, wherein the processor is operable to provide the caller with the option by:
providing the caller with an estimated wait time based at least on the predetermined time limit; and
providing the caller with the option to commit to the predetermined time limit for the call time.

29. A computer program stored on a computer readable medium, the computer program operable to:

receive a call from a caller requesting connection with one of a plurality of agents;

provide the caller with an option to commit to a predetermined time limit for the call time; and

assign a higher priority to the call if the caller commits to the predetermined time limit.

30. The computer program of Claim 29, wherein the computer program is further operable to assign the higher priority to the call by:

queueing the call in a first queue, in response to the caller committing to the predetermined time limit;

queueing the call in a second queue, in response to the caller choosing not to commit to the predetermined time limit.

31. The computer program of Claim 29, wherein the computer program is further operable to:

queue the call in the first queue, in response to the caller committing to the predetermined time limit;

connect the call to one of the agents;

determine that a call time associated with the call has exceeded a predetermined time limit; and

initiate a remedial action, in response to determining that the call time has exceeded the predetermined time limit.

32. The computer program of Claim 31, wherein the computer program is operable to initiate the remedial action by disconnecting the call.

33. The computer program of Claim 31, wherein the computer program is operable to initiate the remedial action by re-queuing the call in the first queue.

34. The computer program of Claim 31, wherein the computer program is operable to initiate the remedial action by:

deciding whether to extend the predetermined time limit;

determining that the time associated with the call has exceeded a second predetermined time limit; and

initiating a second remedial action in response to determining that the time associated with the call has exceeded the second predetermined time limit.

35. The computer program of Claim 34, wherein the computer program is operable to initiate the second remedial action by disconnecting the call.

36. The computer program of Claim 34, wherein the computer program is operable to initiate the second remedial action by re-queuing the call in the first queue.

37. The computer program of Claim 34, wherein the computer program is further operable to initiate a third remedial action in response to deciding not to extend the predetermined time limit.

38. The computer program of Claim 34, wherein the computer program is further operable to start a timer in response to connecting the call to one of the agents, and wherein the computer program is further operable to determine that the time associated with the call has exceeded the predetermined time limit based on the timer.

39. The computer program of Claim 38, wherein the computer program is operable to determine that the time associated with the call has exceeded the predetermined time limit by:

determining that the time associated with the call has exceeded a first predetermined time limit;

activating a warning indication in response to determining that the time has exceeded the first predetermined time limit; and

determining that the time associated with the call has exceeded a second predetermined time limit.

40. The computer program of Claim 39, wherein the computer program is operable to activate the warning indication by generating an audio tone.

41. The computer program of Claim 39, wherein the computer program is operable to activate the warning indication by playing a recorded message to the caller.

42. The computer program of Claim 39, wherein the computer program is operable to provide the caller with the option by:

providing the caller with an estimated wait time based at least on the predetermined time limit; and

providing the caller with the option to commit to the predetermined time limit for the call time.

43. A system for routing calls of an automatic call distributor system, comprising:

means for receiving a call from a caller requesting connection with one of a plurality of agents;

means for providing the caller with an option to commit to a predetermined time limit for the call time; and

means for assigning a higher priority to the call if the caller commits to the predetermined time limit.